

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE IN DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURIAL QUALITY AMONG UNIVERSITY GRADUATES.

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Abstract

This paper explains on the role of university experience in developing entrepreneurial quality among university graduates. The elements of university experience especially the university environment plays important role in developing entrepreneurial quality among university graduates. The role of university experience in developing entrepreneurial quality is supported by Psychosocial Development Theory by Erikson (1950). This theory deals with the development of an individual's identity through the involvement of social environment. It is hoped that Ministry of Higher Education, Higher Education Institutions, National Entrepreneurial Institute and other relevant stakeholders should cooperate and coordinate to come up with more entrepreneurial programs, mentoring activities and events for university graduates to expand their social networking as well as to help the university graduates to become more successful in the future.

Keywords: entrepreneurial quality, university graduates, university experience.

INTRODUCTION

Research on entrepreneurial quality has become increasingly important as human beings are non conforming to each other in terms of interest, qualities, ideas and the response to the creation of opportunities, (Alam, Islam, Khan & Obaidullah 2011; Kuip & Verheul 2003). Kuip and Verheul (2003) pointed that the development of entrepreneurial quality is the basis to foster future entrepreneurial behavior. This statement is supported by Cotton and Gibb (1998) who claimed that possessing entrepreneurial quality can help a person to contribute and cope with rapid social and economic change.

University graduates represent the ultimate outputs or products of Higher Education (HE). However, Teichler (2003) and Elias & Purcell (2004) noted that, even though there is rapid expansion of higher education, the qualities possessed by university graduates to be applied to their career are still questionable. This is because the factors that determine the qualities of university graduates are largely

unexplained and hence, those characteristics of entrepreneurial quality should be emphasized in higher education training (Hegarty & Jones 2008; Henderson & Robertson 2000; McLarty 2005).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial Quality

Entrepreneur is defined as individual with unique values, attitudes and needs which drive and differentiate this individual from others (Koh 1996). The roles of entrepreneur involve creating and beginning a new firm, which is viewed as individual's decision and depends on the driving force behind the entrepreneur (Solymosy 2000; Trevelyan 2008). It is believed that certain quality is needed to take up the role as entrepreneur; therefore attention is given to research on entrepreneurial quality (Littunen 2000). The process of entrepreneurship will not be materialized if the entrepreneurial quality, both personality and behavioral attributes, are not present (Hill, Gowan & Drummond 1999).

Research on entrepreneurial quality has become an interest in the field of entrepreneurship. Previous researchers defined entrepreneurial quality in several ways. In defining the concept of entrepreneurial quality, the previous researchers looked at entrepreneurial quality from various perspectives. Most of the previous studies defined entrepreneurial quality as any good and important values and characteristics possessed by the entrepreneurs (Cumplido & Alcalde 2002; Cumplido & Linan 2007; Frederick 1931; Guzman and Santos 2001; Hvide 2009; Shuhairimi et. al. 2009; Yusuf 1995). In addition, other researchers have looked at the entrepreneurial quality from the psychological perspective (Darroch & Clover 2005; Krauss, Frese, Friedrich & Unger 2005; Valtonen 2007) and skills and competency perspectives (Bath, Smith, Stein & Swann 2001). In brief, in the past studies, most of the researchers defined entrepreneurial quality as good and important characteristics possessed by the entrepreneurs.

University Experience

Greene and Saridakis (2007) in National Council for University graduateship Report suggested that higher education institutions should consider the way which they prepare individuals for entrepreneurship. University experience plays an important role in developing entrepreneurial potentials, focusing on equipping their university graduates with knowledge and skills needed in business creation and innovation within corporations they work with, through the provision of transferable skills in the campus (Poon et. al 2009). Universities as higher education institutions are hoped to develop more supportive environments of entrepreneurship in campus (Pickernell et.al 2011). This is due to the importance of university experience in developing graduate's quality as university graduates spend at least three to five years of campus life (Bath et. al 2004). During that period, the students have developed some qualities to be brought into their career in the future.

According to Barefoot, Jewler and Gardner (2009), university experience is an established process designed by the society to further formal education, so that students or university graduates who attend it are prepared for the economic information. Lin (2011) refers to university experience as a collective noun in a broad sense indicating physical space and buildings on the university campus as well as psychological, social, learning and living aspects of the campus environment. In this study, university experience is classified under psychosocial factor and defined as the psychological, social, learning and living aspects of the campus environment.

Lin (2011) in her studies claimed that university experience may influence student's life and development in future. In fact, the student's perception on campus environment acts as a predictor of their university experience (Gloria et al 2005). The major benefit of a university experience is that it can deepen

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the human capital of individuals (Becker 1985). A research conducted by Lin (2011) revealed that the more students accept and interact with the university experience, the more satisfaction they have with their life at the university and the better they grow throughout their university career. Furthermore, Gibson et. al (2011) claimed that there is a need to identify factors which influence the development of entrepreneurial quality related to entrepreneurship education. Individuals have the opportunity to develop range of generic skills and also abilities for better impact in the future from their university experience (Greene & Saridakis 2007).

In addition, university graduates who employ positive coping skill will build interpersonal and social networks that in turn will enhance their abilities and inspire the sense of belonging as well as the development of identity in them (Lin 2011). Previously, several researches were done on university experience. Saenz, Marcoulides, Junn & Young (1999) looked on the association between university experience and academic performance among minority students. Furthermore, Douglas, McClelland & Davies (2008) developed a conceptual model of student satisfaction resulted from the student's experience in university. Greene and Saridakis (2007) reported that universities play a crucial role to influence university graduates to involve in entrepreneurship in the future. Beside that, Mertova & Nair (2009) who conducted university graduates employer survey based on graduate experiences in Monash University and found that university experience benefits the student after graduation specifically in their career life.

In campus, university graduates learn and gain benefits through the activities held in the universities and the changes of the university graduates are considered as a reflection of the university experience (Narvaez & Rest 1990). Other than that, Barefoot, Jewler & Gardner (2009) stated that in university, university graduates learn to manage their own life such as managing their time and finance. Furthermore, Narvaez and Rest (1990) concluded that university experience affects the stimulation of the intellectual which in turn will have impacts on how the university graduates decide and overhaul morally.

University graduates

There is a growing recognition that university graduates in particular and related supportive environments are of critical importance for economic growth and development (Nabi 2000). Furthermore, university graduates represent the ultimate outputs or products of Higher Education (HE). However, Teichler (2003) and Elias & Purcell (2004) noted that, even though there is rapid expansion of higher education, the qualities possessed by university graduates to be applied to their career are still questionable. This is because the factors that determine the qualities of university graduates are largely unexplained and hence, those characteristics of entrepreneurial quality should be emphasized in higher education training (Hegarty & Jones 2008; Henderson & Robertson 2000; McLarty 2005).

Previous studies discovered that most of failures related to individual career were due to the lack of entrepreneurial quality (Raduan, Kumar & Yen 2006). That is the reason why entrepreneurial quality has become the central investigation in studies conducted, particularly in entrepreneurship. The quality of human capital development has become the critical element and the basis for the nation development (Norashidah 2008). Malaysia Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak believes the university graduates must be at the forefront of the Economic New Model (MEB) in order for Malaysia to become a developed nation in 2020. Under that proposition, Ministry of Higher Education is geared towards producing quality university graduates through various programs and activities.

In order to gain sustainable growth, entrepreneurial quality is viewed as a crucial factor which affects the business potential such as in overcoming barriers as well as increasing the business survival

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(Darroch & Clover 2005). Entrepreneurial quality is essential in increasing the competitiveness of regional economy, not only the competitiveness of the entrepreneurs themselves (Cumplido & Alcalde 2002).

University experience and entrepreneurial quality among university graduates.

University experience plays an important role in developing entrepreneurial potentials, focusing on equipping their university graduates with knowledge and skills needed in business creation and innovation within corporations they work with, through the provision of transferable skills in the campus (Poon et. al 2009). Universities as higher education institutions are hoped to develop more supportive environments of entrepreneurship in campus (Pickernell et.al 2013). This is due to the importance of university experience in developing graduate's quality as university graduates spend at least three to five years of campus life (Bath et. al 2004).

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In this study, university experience consists of an examination of university graduates' perceptions of the elements of the university environment that are related to university graduates' quality and development. All university graduates have gone through the university experience. Chickering, Arthur, McCormick and John (1970) who are the researchers in the human development field, pointed that individual quality develops along which change that occurs during college or university years. Furthermore, Pascarella (1987) claimed that, the extent and quality of graduate's involvement in college are the principal determinants of university impact on graduate's development. Thus it shows that university experience has a positive relationship with the graduate's quality.

Psychosocial Development Theory

Psychosocial development theory mentions that individual quality is formed by the interaction between the person and the surroundings (Littunen 2000). Thus, it is assumed that the entrepreneurial quality of an individual is formed by his or her social interaction which is the function of the psychosocial factors. Psychosocial factors such as a person's life situation, past experiences and changes in life play an important role in a person. Psychosocial development by Erikson (1950) deals with the development of an individual's identity through the involvement of social environment (Whitbourne et. al 2009). This theory states that individual qualities are not solely determined by biological influences (personal factors) but also can be influenced by psychological as well as environmental experiences.

Psychosocial Development Theory is known as one of the most well-known human personality theories called the Father of Psychosocial Theory which focuses on how the society shapes and influences an individual growth and the pursuit for identity (Berk 2007). Psychosocial Development Theory also claims that the development of individual quality occurs within a social context (Gatten 2004). The thrust of Psychosocial Development Theory is that personality continuously evolves throughout life. Every stage in life has its own challenges that require a person's surrounding to assist him or her in life (Mey 2009).

Psychosocial Development Theory explains the influence of personal environment factors and psychological factors on the development of entrepreneurial quality. The effects of personal environment

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factors on entrepreneurial quality have been well examined and usually refer to trait theory (Baum et. al. 2001; Shane, Nicolaou, Cherkas & Spector 2010). However, the effects of psychosocial factors on entrepreneurial quality are lacking of examination, especially in relation to graduate entrepreneurial quality (Pickernell et. al 2011). Applying psychosocial development theory that human development is influenced by the interaction of psychological and social factors (psychosocial), it is proposed that psychosocial factors should have some effects on the development of entrepreneurial quality at an individual level. Furthermore, this theory has also been widely accepted and applied in management and psychological studies (Olaniyan & Okemakinde 2008; Whitbourne et. al 2009).

In addition, based on psychosocial development theory, McKeown, Nixon, Martin and Ranson (1996) claimed that human quality can be developed from the participation in life. Whitbourne et. al (2009) adopted this theory by investigating the relationship between life history variables namely education, work and long term relationships with changes in psychosocial development. Mroczek & Spiro (2005) added that these life history variables are important predictors in individual quality development. Moreover, Eggebeen and Sturgeon (2006) stated that exposure to the differing value systems prevalent during colleges and early adult years played a role in affecting ones values, attitudes and relationship qualities and dynamics differently.

CONCLUSION

The quality of human capital development has become the critical element and the basis for the nation development (Norashidah 2008). It can be concluded that university experience plays an important role in developing entrepreneurial quality. Psychosocial factors such as social support and mentoring also help in developing entrepreneurial quality among university graduates which in turn will lead to entrepreneurial success. Perhaps Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia can provide more entrepreneurial environments for students to develop entrepreneurial quality in future university graduates who will achieve entrepreneurial success in the future. In order to encourage university graduates, Ministry of Higher Education, Higher Education Institutions, National Entrepreneurial Institute and other relevant stakeholders should cooperate and coordinate to come up with more entrepreneurial programs, mentoring activities and events for university graduates to expand their social networking. These efforts might help the university graduates to become more successful in the future. With an increasing number of successful university graduates, unemployment problem among university graduates in Malaysia hopefully can be resolved when these future university graduates are able to offer work opportunities to other university graduates.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It is suggested that future researcher to look at the impact of the development of entrepreneurial quality empirically since entrepreneurship is a process which takes certain period of time; that is there might be other factors at the early stage of the development of entrepreneurial quality in graduate entrepreneurs. A wider and more detailed approach on entrepreneurial quality among graduate entrepreneurs should be done. This paper focuses only on the university experience among university graduates. Other than this factor, future studies might also look at other factors that can influence the development of entrepreneurial quality among university graduates.

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